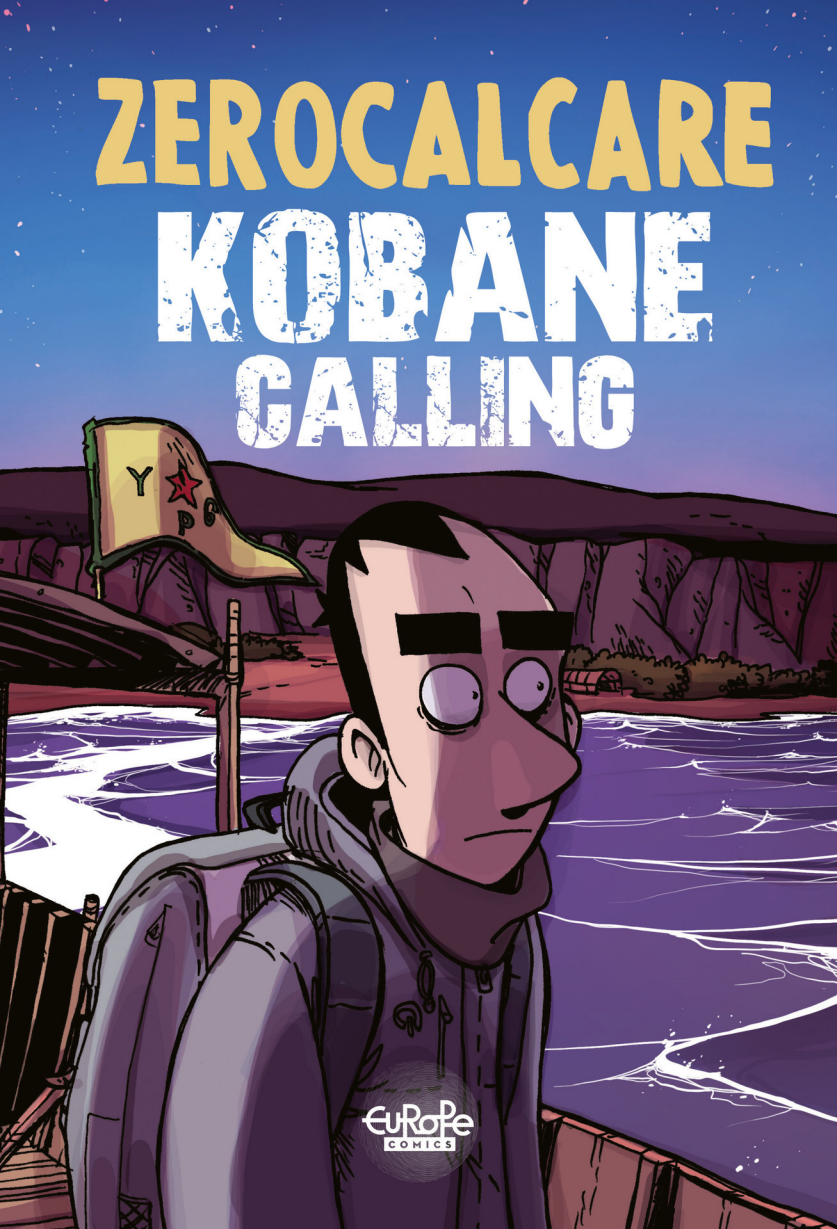
ZEROCALCARE

KOBANE CALLING



EUROPE COMICS

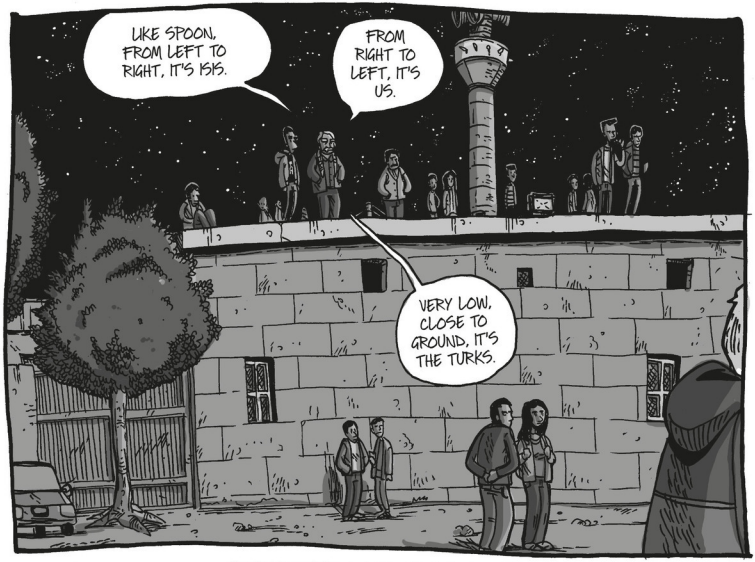
KOBANE CALLING

FACES, WORDS AND DOODLES FROM REBIBBIA TO THE TURKISH-SYRIAN BORDER.

BY ZEROCALCARE

BLAM.
BLAM
BLAM.
RATATATA
TUM. TUM.
BOOOM.
BLAM.
WHAT ABOUT THESE?
WHEN YOU HEAR "RATATATA",
IT'S ISIS.
WHEN YOU HEAR "TUM TUM TUM",
IT'S US.
WHAT ABOUT SBOOM?
WELL, THAT DEPENDS.
FIRE THEN SBOOOM, IT'S THE AMERICANS.
SBOOM ONLY, IT'S ISIS.

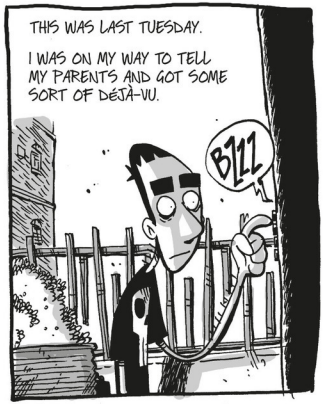
I CLOSE MY EYES. FOCUS ON WHAT IS HAPPENING. BUT THE QUESTION'S ALWAYS THE SAME.

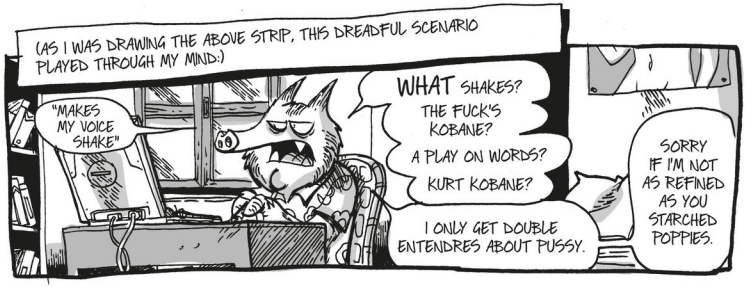


HOW THE FUCK DID I END UP HERE?

PROLOGUE

I NEVER QUITE KNOW HOW FAR BACK TO GO, WITH EVENTS. TWO DAYS? A WEEK? A MONTH?

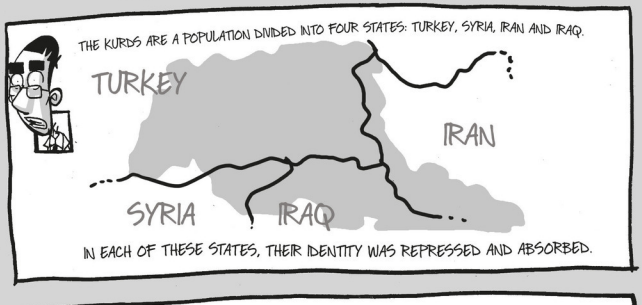


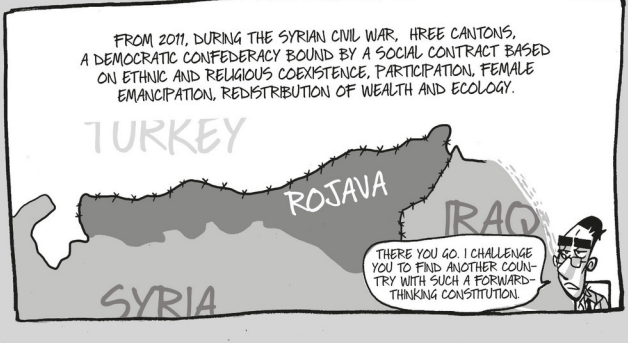


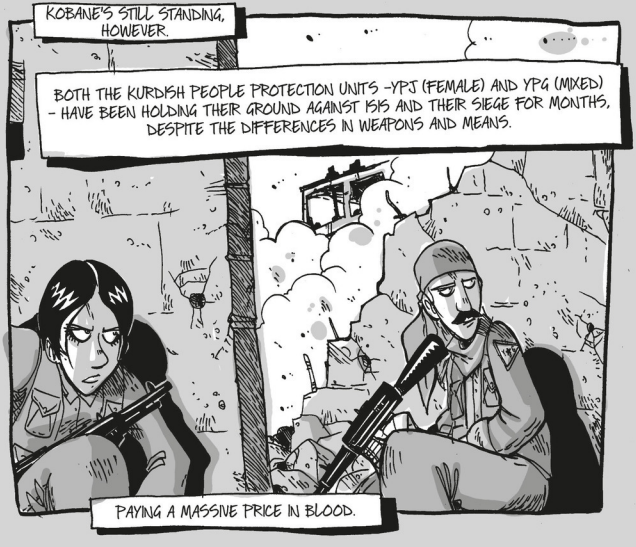
SORRY, FOLKS. I SWEAR, I AIN'T TAKING THE PISS, A GIRL I'LL BE REPRESENTING AS A KOALA ONCE ASKED ME THIS:

FUCKING LECTURE>>SKIP

THIS IS WHY I'M GOING TO DO A BRIEF RECAP NOW. IF YOU ALREADY KNOW IT, SKIP IT, LIKE YOU DO WITH ADVERTS BEFORE YOUTUBE VIDEOS. I'M EVEN GOING TO PLACE THAT GREY HIGHLIGHT OVER WHAT YOU CAN SKIP.





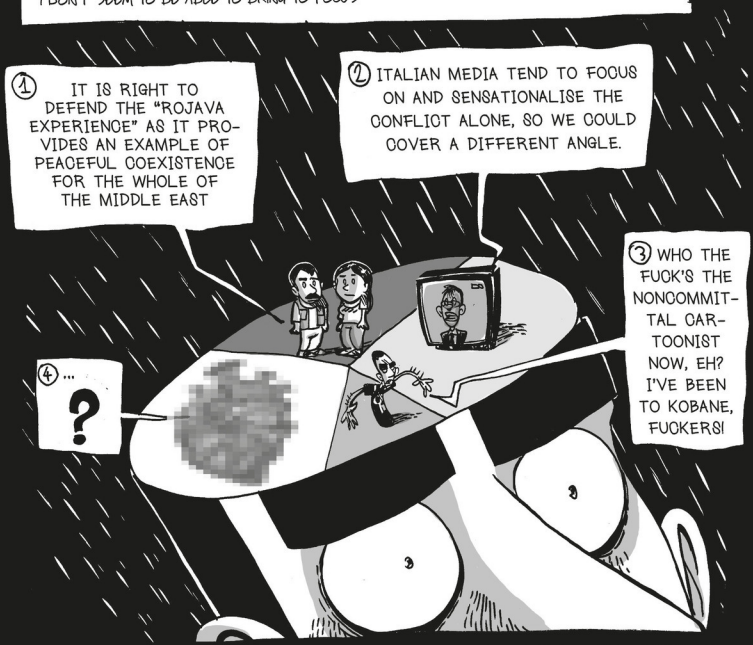


OK, END OF THE FUCKING LECTURE

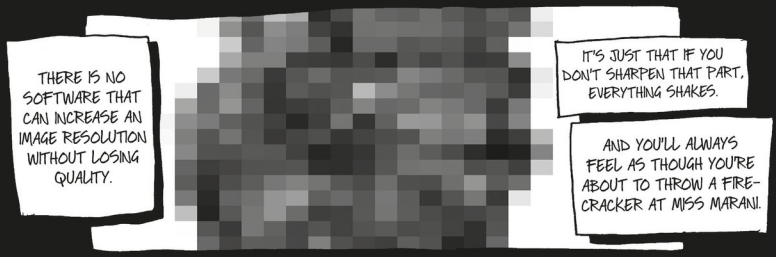
PIXEL

THE RESOLUTION'S FAULT, THAT'S WHAT IT IS. HERE I AM, ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING NICE, YET I FEEL AS THOUGH I'M ABOUT TO THROW A FIRECRACKER AT THE HEADMISTRESS. (SHE WAS A BITCH, ANYWAY, SO EVEN THAT'S GOT ITS OWN MORAL VALUE)

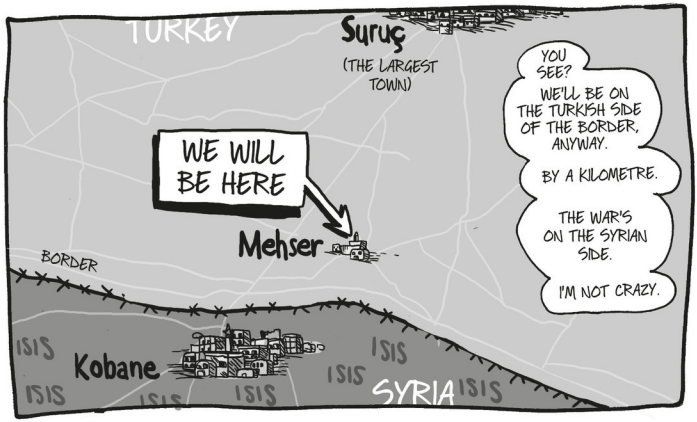
THING IS THAT IF I DRAW A PIE CHART OF MY MOTIVATIONS, THERE'S A SLICE I DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO BRING TO FOCUS



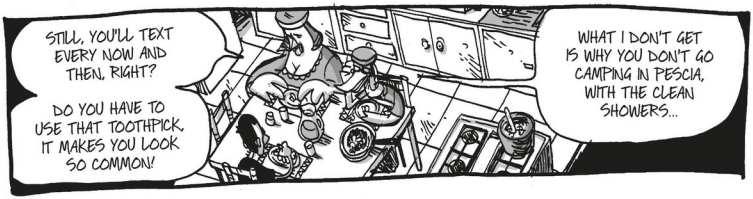
SEE, THE FOURTH SLICE, THE LARGEST, IS OUT OF FOCUS. IT "PIXELLATES". I DON'T GET IT.



THE ANNOUNCEMENT


TURKEY
Suruç
(THE LARGEST TOWN)
WE WILL BE HERE
Mehser
BORDER
Kobane
ISIS
SYRIA
YOU SEE?
WE'LL BE ON THE TURKISH SIDE OF THE BORDER, ANYWAY.
BY A KILOMETRE.
THE WAR'S ON THE SYRIAN SIDE.
I'M NOT CRAZY.

RIGHT, CALCARE, PREPARE YOURSELF.
THEY'RE GONNA LOSE IT.
THEY'LL GO MAD.
JUST ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES. ANSWER BACK. DISCUSS. REMEMBER.
"SHE STARTED IT BY TELLING ME OFF FOR BEING LATE WHEN THE BELL HADN'T EVEN GONE."


STILL, YOU'LL TEXT EVERY NOW AND THEN, RIGHT?
DO YOU HAVE TO USE THAT TOOTHPICK. IT MAKES YOU LOOK SO COMMON!
WHAT I DON'T GET IS WHY YOU DON'T GO CAMPING IN PESCIA, WITH THE CLEAN SHOWERS...

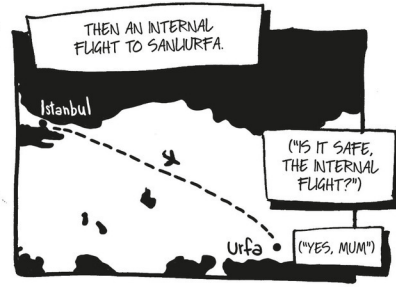
PASS THE PEPPER?
...
ENOUGH WITH PEP-PER!
WE'VE BEEN DIVORCED FOR TWENTY YEARS AND YOU STILL COME RUNNING TO ME WHEN YOUR DIVERTICULA HURT!

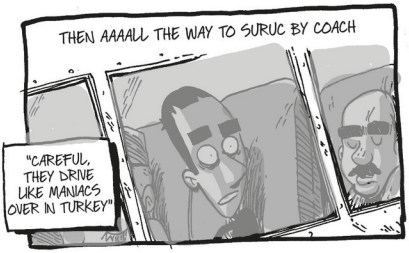
STILL, WHAT CAN THEY SAY TO A 31-YEAR OLD? YOU'RE AN ADULT AT 31. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. NOBODY CAN FORCE YOU TO DO OR STOP YOU DOING ANYTHING.

(WHICH IS PRECISELY WHY I THEN GAVE THE GASTROSCOPY A MISS)

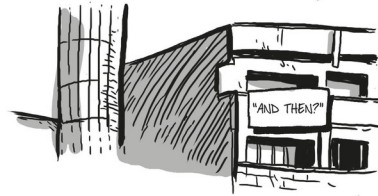
RELAY

IT'S THE ROMAN RELAY FOR KOBANE, A FEW PEOPLE FROM COMMUNITY CENTRES STRIVING TO WORK WITH OTHER RELAYS TO ENSURE TWO KINDS OF OUTCOMES:

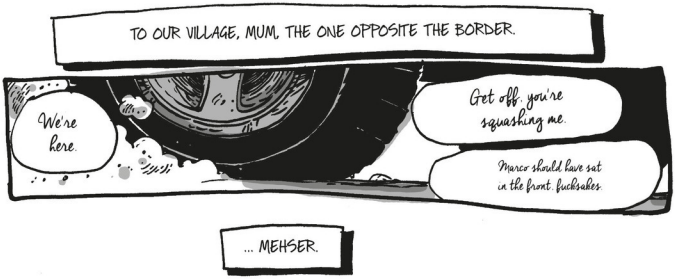




(THIS THING THAT I'M OFF TO A WAR ZONE AND MOTHER WORRIES ABOUT THE HIGHWAY CODE IS PATHOLOGICAL, I FEAR).



THEN, DUNNO, WE MAY CATCH A LIFT, A TAXI, A BUS, FUCK KNOWS... BUT IT'S EIGHT OF US, I'M SURE A BRAINIAC WILL HAVE PRINTED HOW TO GET THERE OFF THE INTERNET...

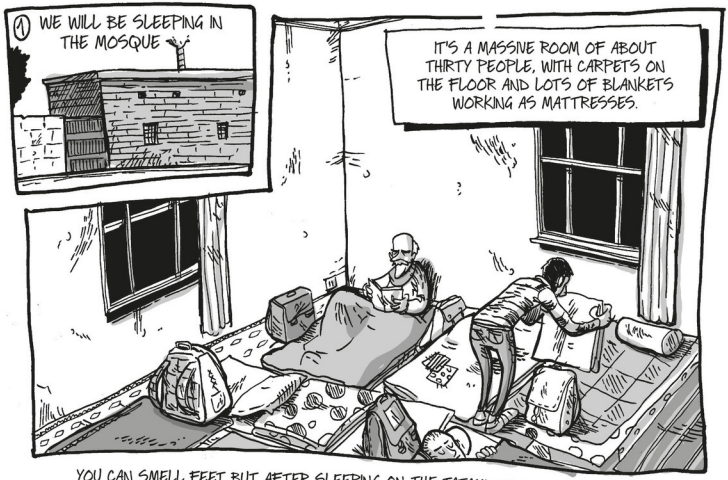

TO OUR VILLAGE, MUM, THE ONE OPPOSITE THE BORDER.
We're here.
Get off. you're squashing me.
Marco should have sat in the front. fucksake.
... MEHSER.

"PROMISE YOU'LL BE CAREFUL?
SERIOUSLY.
THEIR DRIVING'S WORSE THAN IN NAPLES."

MEHSER

MEHSER'S A VILLAGE OF WHAT? ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE?
I'D LOVE TO ARGUE IN FAVOUR OF ITS ARCHITECTURE, BUT ITS MERITS LAY ELSEWHERE.

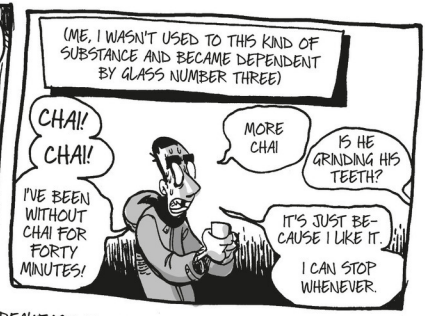
NOT ALL ARE PERMANENT RESIDENTS: THERE ARE KURDS FROM FAR AND WIDE THERE TO SUPPORT KOBANE, FIGHTERS' FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, A FEW INTERNATIONAL SUPPORTERS. MY INTELLIGENCE LEADS ME TO GATHER THAT:



YOU CAN SMELL FEET BUT AFTER SLEEPING ON THE TATAMI OF A WELL-KNOWN GYM IN MILAN, IT FEELS LIKE PERFUME TO ME.

(TO PROTECT MY FRIEND ZP'S PRIVACY, HE SHALL BE REPRESENTED WEARING A GAS MASK)

(2) THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE VILLAGE'S SOCIAL ORGANISATION IS CHAI MAN. HE STANDS OUTSIDE THE MOSQUE ALL DAY, SERVING EVERYONE FREE TEA.



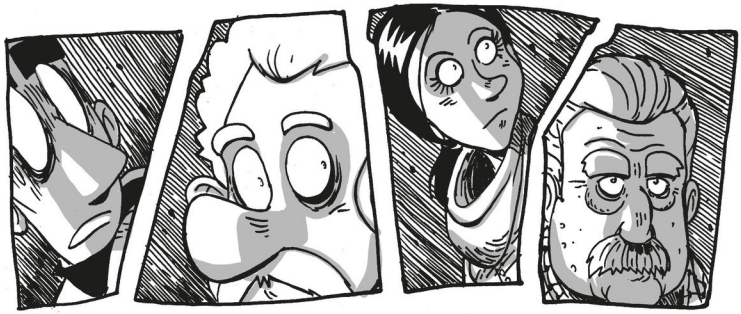
(3) EVERYONE GETS A FREE MEAL FOR BREAKFAST AND DINNER TOO.

("GOTCHA" IS GREAT IN ANY SITUATION. THANK GOD FOR SLANG.)

AIR STRIKE

WELL, ASIDE FROM THE SHOCKING INITIAL IMPACT, EVERYTHING SEEMS FINE.
OF COURSE IT'S FINE.
FOLKS FROM NAPLES, BOLOGNA, VENICE HAVE ALREADY BEEN HERE.
FUCK KNOWS WHAT I EXPECTED.
YOU RECKON THEY WOULD HAVE, IF...

SBOOM



ABOUT THREE TUBE STOPS AWAY.
A BIT LIKE REBIBBIA-SANTA MARIA DEL SOCCORSO

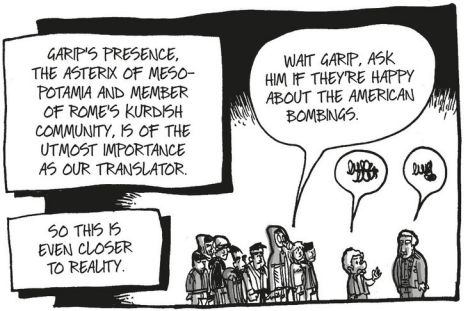
(SOME NOTES ON THE DIALOGUES YOU'RE READING)

WORKING ON THIS COMIC REQUIRED AN EXERCISE IN SYNTHESIS THAT SOMEWHAT ALTERED IT'S ADHERENCE TO REALITY, TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST.

LET'S TAKE THIS APPARENTLY NORMAL DIALOGUE, FOR INSTANCE:

BUT, IT'S EIGHT OF US AND WE'RE HALF MONKEYS. SO THIS IS HOW IT REALLY WENT:

IF YOU ADD THAT AROUND 90% OF THE PEOPLE THERE DO NOT SPEAK ANYTHING OTHER THAN FUCKING KURDISH, NOT EVEN GESTURING HELPS.

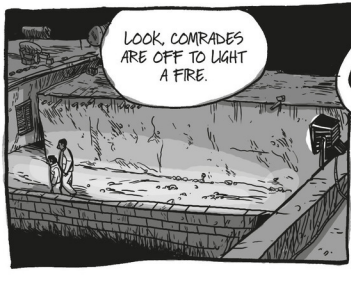


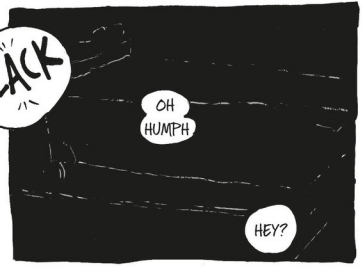
WHICH IS WHY I OPTED FOR A MORE ESSENTIAL REPRESENTATION.

THEN THERE'S SUCH EMOTION AND SILENCE THAT I CAN DRAW THEM JUST AS THEY ARE, WITH NO NEED FOR SYNTHESIS OR OMISSIONS.

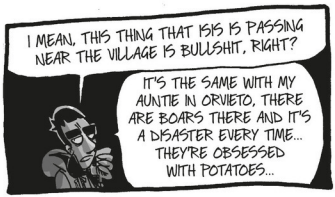
LIGHT

RATATATA. BLAM BLAM





STILL, YOU CANNOT REALLY SHOW THAT YOU'RE SHITTING YOURSELF. YOU MUST ACT ALL CASUAL, LIKE THE MAN OF THE WORLD WHO HAS SEEN IT ALL ALREADY.



CONTRADDIZIONI.

"PERCHÉ STO QUA?"

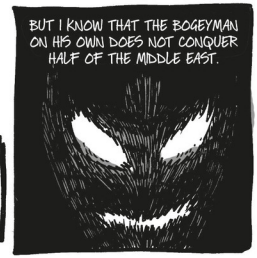
DEVO METTERE A FUOCO QUELLA RISPOSTA - PER FORZA.

SENNÒ PASSO LA NOTTE CON GLI OCCHI SBARRATI A CHIEDERMI CHI CAZZO ME LA FA FATTO FA', A STARE QUA PER TERRA COL'ISIS CHE STRISCIA LA' FUORI.

ECCO. STA COSA DELL'ISIS MI METTE A DISAGIO. COME IMMAGINARIO, PROPRIO. SENTO CHE STO SOVRAPPONENDO DUE PIANI DIVERSI. CIOÈ.

CAPITO PERCHÉ STO A DISAGIO? PERCHÉ QUELLA CATEGORIA, QUEL MALE ASSOLUTO, FUORI DA KEN IL GUERRIERO MI PARE UNA SEMPLIFICAZIONE. VORREI COGLIERE DELLE PROSPETTIVE DIVERSE. MA COME FAI?

EVEN KEN THE WARRIOR'S NASTY PUNKS DIDN'T POP OUT OF NOWHERE.
THEY WERE THE EXPRESSION OF SOMETHING MORE STRUCTURED, LESS IRRATIONAL.



PERHAPS, IF I RATIONALISE IT, I CAN FALL ASLEEP MORE EASILY.

WANNA KNOW WHY I NEVER LEAVE REBIBBIA?

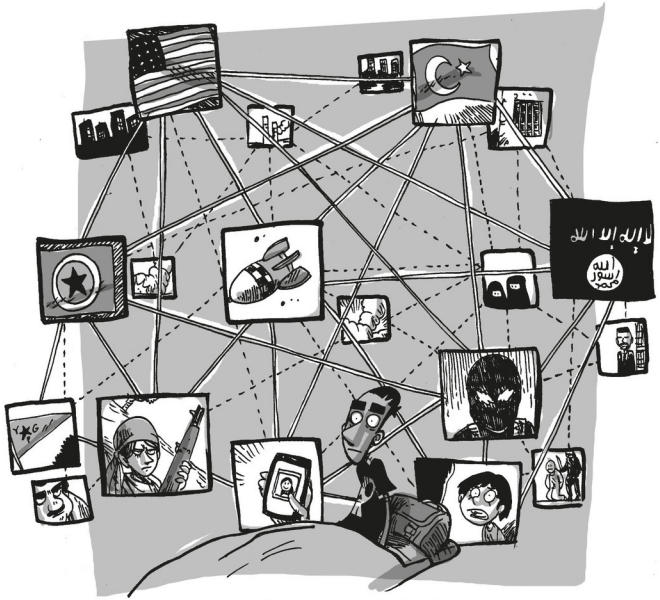
BECAUSE IN REBIBBIA I FEEL AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD. I'M WHERE THINGS HAPPEN.

IN A VILLAGE WITH HOUSES MADE OF MUD AND NO MOTHERFUCKING BOG, BUT WHERE A KID AT NIGHT CAN CHAT TO HIS GIRLFRIEND ON SKYPE.

THE CENTRE OF ALL THE CONTRADICTIONS AND CONFLICTS OF THE GLOBALISED WORLD.

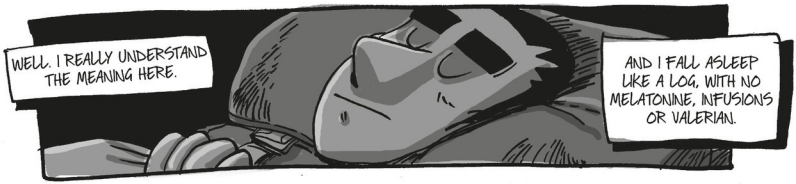
WHERE THE AMERICANS BOMBBUTNOTTOOMUCH, TURKEY ISWITHNATOBUT REALLYISHELPINGISISAGAINSTTHEKURDS, THERE IS A MUSLIM SOCIETY WHO MADE OF THELIBERATIONOFWOMEN ITS FLAG FIGHTING AGAINST ANOTHERMUSLIMSOCIETYWHOMADEOFGENDERANDRELIGIOUSOPPRESSION ITS OWN.

AND POVERTYPROGRESSGROWINGECONOMYREPRESSIONMENWOMENROLESRELIGIONOIL.....



EVERYTHING

YOU KNOW THAT MAX PEZZALI SONG? "WE ARE AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD/WE ARE IN IT TOO/WHERE EVERYTHING HAPPENS..."



WHITE RICE YELLOW RICE

THE "HUMANITARIAN" SIDE OF THE TRIP, AS WELL AS SUPPLYING MEDICINES, CONSISTS IN HELPING OUT IN THE WAREHOUSES WHERE PARCELS OF FOOD ARE PREPARED AND SHIPPED TO THE REFUGEE CAMPS.

THEREFORE EACH BAG MUST CONTAIN:

A CAN OF OIL

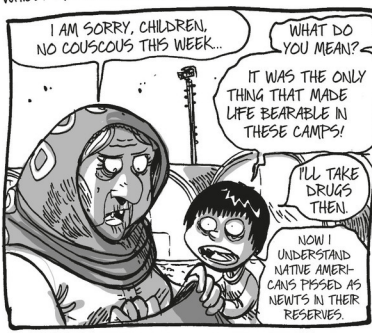
A JAR OF TOMATO SAUCE

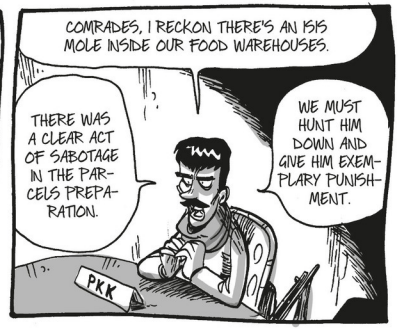
A BAG OF BEANS (WHITE OR BLACK)

A BAG OF RICE (YELLOW OR WHITE).

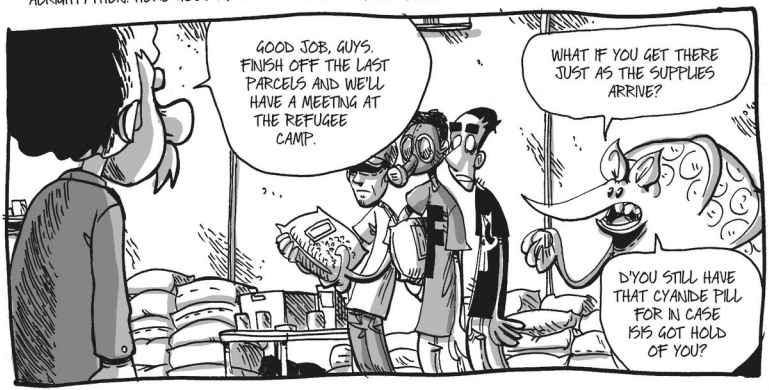
THE GOOD THING ABOUT DOING A JOB THAT IS SEDENTARY AS FUCK IS THAT HALF AN HOUR OF TOUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME FEEL HIGH AS A KITE, IN THE THROES OF SOME SORT OF MEGALOMANIAC STATE.

WHILST MY ARMADILLO FRIEND HELPS ME REALISE, THE MOST HORRENDOUS SCENARIOS POUR THROUGH MY MIND.





ALRIGHTYTHEN. HERE GOES MY DREAM OF BECOMING A FATHER OF THE KURDISH HOMELAND.

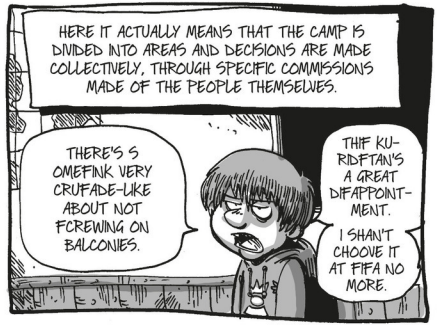


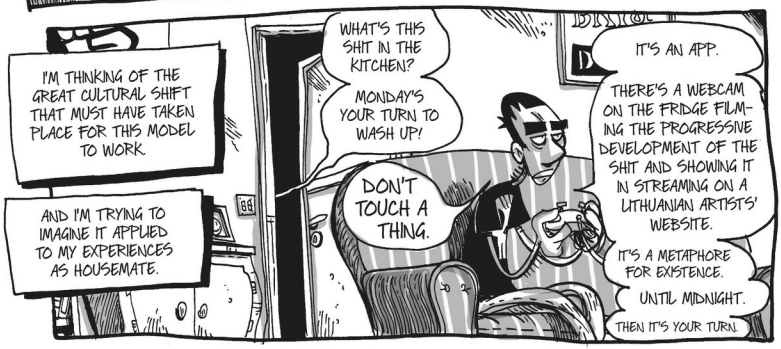
"YOU MIGHT WANT TO KEEP IT UNDER YOUR TONGUE."

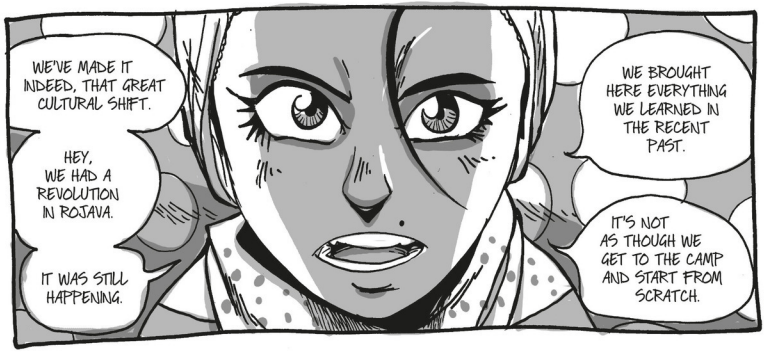
THE ROJAVA MODEL

AT FIRST GLANCE, REFUGEE CAMPS LOOK THE SAME ALL OVER THE WORLD.

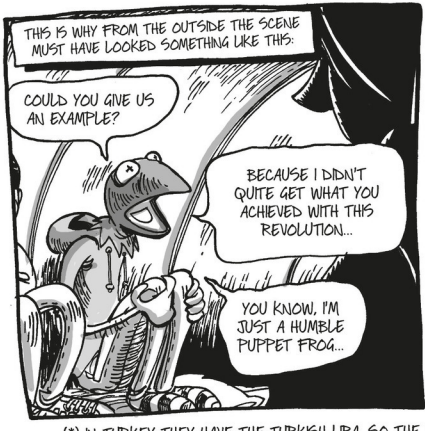
WHAT SETS IT APART FROM OTHER CIVIL DEFENCE CAMPS IS THAT EVERY ASPECT OF COMMUNAL LIFE IS MANAGED BY THE PEOPLE HERE.

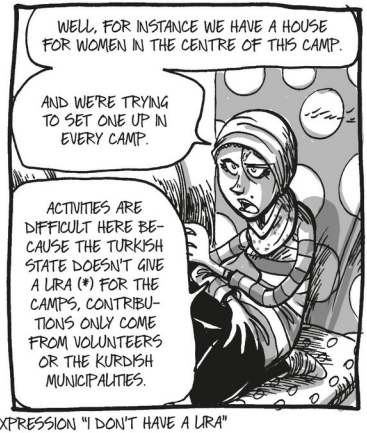




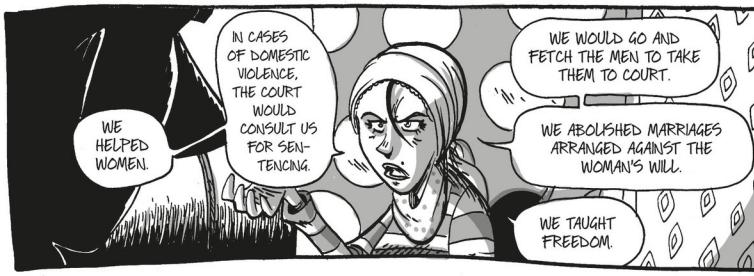


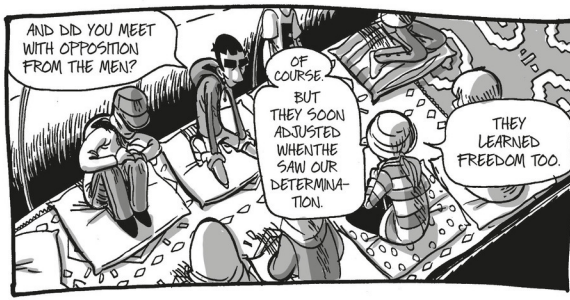
MEET NEWROZ KOBANE, ONE OF THE CAMP LEADERS. I RECKON SHE'S EVEN YOUNGER THAN ME, BUT SHE OOZES AUTHORITY IN SUCH A WAY THAT I FEEL LIKE KERMIT OFF THE MUPPETS NEXT TO HER.

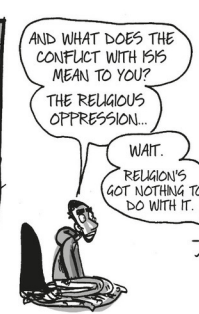




(*) IN TURKEY THEY HAVE THE TURKISH LIRA, SO THE EXPRESSION "I DON'T HAVE A LIRA" SOUNDS RIGHT HERE RATHER THAN VINTAGE LIKE WITH US


WE HELPED WOMEN.
IN CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, THE COURT WOULD CONSULT US FOR SENTENCING.
WE WOULD GO AND FETCH THE MEN TO TAKE THEM TO COURT.
WE ABOLISHED MARRIAGES ARRANGED AGAINST THE WOMAN'S WILL.
WE TAUGHT FREEDOM.


AND DID YOU MEET WITH OPPOSITION FROM THE MEN?
OF COURSE.
BUT THEY SOON ADJUSTED WHENTHE SAW OUR DETERMINATION.
THEY LEARNED FREEDOM TOO.


AND WHAT DOES THE CONFLICT WITH ISIS MEAN TO YOU?
THE RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION...
WAIT.
RELIGION'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

WE ARE MUSLIM WOMEN.
NOBODY CAN GIVE US LESSONS IN ISLAM.
IT'S THE ISIS FOLKS WHO ARE NOT.

WE RESPECT EVERYONE.
WE BURY THE DEAD. THEIRS TOO.
THEY CHOP OFF HEADS, HANDS, FEET. THEY KILL CHILDREN.
THEY'RE BEASTS WITH NO CONSCIENCE.
WHAT RELIGION CAN SUCH PEOPLE HAVE?

AS I LISTEN TO HER, I THINK OF OUR OWN DOMESTIC SHARKS, BUILDING CONSENSUS WITH PSEUDO-CRUSADES AGAINST ISLAM, FILLING OUR HEADS WITH NONSENSE ABOUT DEFENDING WOMEN'S RIGHTS...

...WHEREAS THE ONLY FIGHT AGAINST ISIS HAS BEEN THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF MEN AND WOMEN RECLAIMING THEIR MUSLISM IDENTITY (AND NOT ONLY THAT, THE KURDS PEACEFULLY DWELL AMONGST SEVERAL DIFFERENT RELIGIONS)

AND THEY EXPLAIN THIS TO ME IN A REFUGEE CAMP WHERE THE LEADER IS A WOMAN...

...IN A TOWN, SORUC, WHERE THE MAYOR IS A WOMAN...

...WHILST WE ARE GUESTS IN A VILLAGE, MEHSER, WHERE THE CHIEF IS A WOMAN.

THE FUCK ARE WE SUPPOSED TO TEACH THEM?

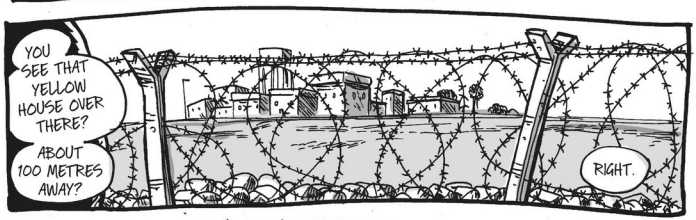
(HEY, I'M NOT SAYING THIS IS HEAVEN AND A PLACE WITHOUT CONTRADICTIONS, MIND. IT'S JUST THAT THEY'RE NOT THE ONES WE EXPECT WITH OUR WESTERN PARAMETRES AND STEREOTYPES.)

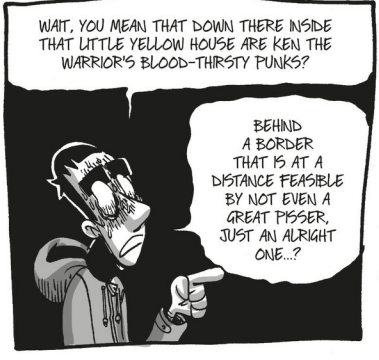
(PLUS, THEY'RE ODD OLDIES AND CHILDREN. THEY DON'T FOLLOW YOU, ASK YOU QUESTIONS, SAY "CANNAVARO!" AND THEY DON'T ASK IF YOU SUPPORT MILAN OR JUVE. THEY JUST STARE AT YOU.)

HOME

SORRY I DON'T REMEMBER THE NAME IS AN EVEN SMALLER VILLAGE THAN MEHSER. WE WALK PAST IT TO GO HOME. IT'S ABOUT TEN MUD HOUSES AND SICKLY GOATS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SPEND TWO CENTS TO BUY THEM GRASS TO GRAZE, POOR SODS.

AH, AND IT'S REALLY NEAR THE BORDER. REALLY NEAR.

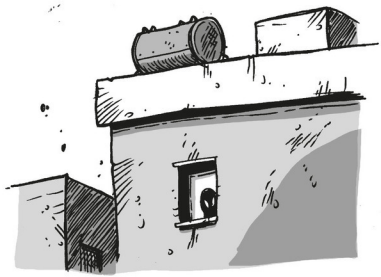




I TRY TO SHARPEN MY GAZE TO SEE IF I CAN CATCH A GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING BEHIND THOSE WINDOWS.

I'M SURE I'M GOING TO GET CRAZY SCARED LIKE I DID IN LOCH NESS.

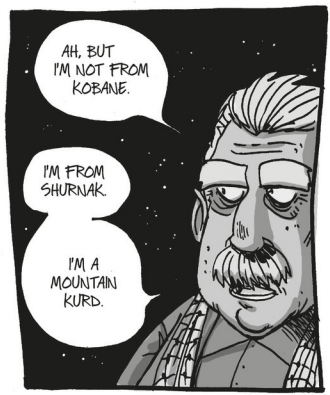
BUT NOTHING. THEY JUST HIDE IN THERE.



AND REMAIN THOSE SHADOWS INSIDE MY HEAD.

EVERY THING

I THINK WE'RE LEAVING TOMORROW.
I HOPE NEXT TIME WE SEE EACH OTHER YOU'LL BE BACK HOME, IN FREE KOBANE.
THANK YOU FOR EVERY-THING.


AH, BUT I'M NOT FROM KOBANE.
I'M FROM SHURNAK.
I'M A MOUNTAIN KURD.

WHADDAYA MEAN...?
I DONE TWELVE YEARS PRISON IN TURKEY, FOR POLITICS.
THEN GOT OUT AND FASCIST TURKS SHOOT ME.
TWICE.
THEN GO TO BERLIN, IN EXILE, TWENTY YEARS.
THEN ARRIVED HERE, TWO WEEKS AGO.

WELL...
EXCUSE ME...
...IF I MAY SEEM RUDE BUT...
...WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU COME HERE FOR?

WELL, THIS IS DECISIVE BATTLE.
NOT JUST FOR KURDS.
FOR HUMAN RACE.
ALL MEN AND WOMEN THAT CARE FOR FREEDOM AND HUMAN RACE SHOULD BE IN KOBANE TODAY.
YOU RACK YOUR BRAINS TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE HERE.
TO SEE THROUGH THAT MASS OF PIXELS.
BUT IT'S SOMETHING YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL.
THAT YOU CARRY WITH YOU ALWAYS.
IT'S THE HEART.
NOT ANY OLD ONE. YOURS.
WITH ITS LUMPS, ITS SCARS, ITS PATCHES.

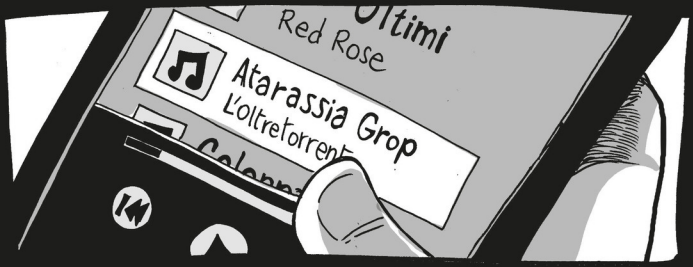
HEARTS ARE NOT ALL THE SAME. THEY ARE MODELLED AND MOULDED FROM EXPERIENCES. LIKE A TREE TRUNK THAT GROWS BENT, ADJUSTING TO ITS SURROUNDINGS.

AND EVERYTHING THAT HELPED SHAPE YOUR HEART...TEACHINGS, LEARNINGS, THINGS THAT MADE YOU CRY, THAT MADE YOU LAUGH, THE BLOOD THAT BOILED INSIDE YOU AND THE ONE THEY MADE YOU SPIT OUT.

EVERY THING.

IS IN KOBANE TODAY.

BEYOND THE STREAM (PARMA 1922)



"IF TONIGHT LASTED ONE HUNDRED YEARS..."

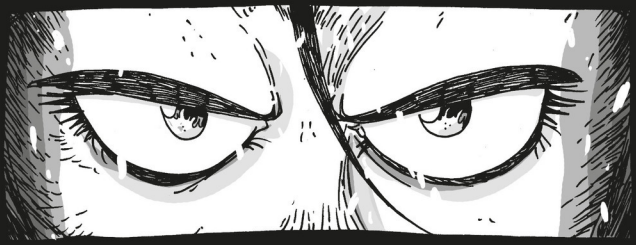
"...WE'D STAY AWAKE, EMBRACING IN THE DARK..."

"...THE ENEMY IS UPON OUR CITY."

"IF TONIGHT LASTED ONE HUNDRED YEARS..."

"...WE'D BE STANDING, EMBRACING A DREAM..."

"...WITH WRITING ON ITS FACE..."



"...THERE'LL BE NO PASSING THROUGH HERE."

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